

Re: Testimony in Opposition of HB 2348

February 9, 2025

Fellow Kansans,

My name is Dr. Jason Miller, and I am a resident of Topeka as well as an anthropologist and faculty member at Washburn University; however, I want to clarify that I do not represent Washburn University and am submitting this testimony as a private citizen. I strongly oppose HB 2348, which would undermine the institution of tenure in Kansas's postsecondary education system.

Tenure is a critical safeguard that ensures faculty can conduct research and teach without external pressures, helping to maintain a diversity of viewpoints in higher education. Strong tenure protections attract and retain highly qualified faculty who prepare students with critical thinking skills essential for today's workforce. Without tenure, faculty may be less willing to pursue innovative research or tackle difficult topics, which can limit the economic and intellectual contributions of Kansas's universities. Ensuring that Kansas remains competitive in attracting top educators benefits all Kansans by fostering an environment where differing perspectives can be explored and debated.

Furthermore, tenure provides stability that benefits students and communities alike. Faculty members who have long-term commitments to their institutions build deep relationships with students, mentor future leaders, and contribute to long-term projects that serve Kansas communities. While tenure is not a guarantee of lifetime employment, it allows faculty to invest in their institutions and local communities without fear of politically motivated dismissal. For example, I relocated to Kansas for a tenure-track position, and since arriving in 2018 and earning tenure in 2023, I have purchased a home, developed a Topeka-focused research agenda, and actively contributed to the local community through my teaching, research, and service. Without tenure protections, Kansas risks losing dedicated faculty who commit to long-term educational and economic initiatives, leading to higher faculty turnover, increased hiring costs, and diminished student outcomes. Strengthening tenure policies while ensuring accountability is the best path forward for Kansas higher education.

I urge the committee to reject HB 2348 and instead support policies that attract and retain high-quality educators while maintaining accountability. Weakening tenure protections risks reducing the competitiveness and effectiveness of Kansas's higher education system, ultimately harming students and the state's future. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
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